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SUBJECT: SLOVENIA: NEW GOS CABINET CONFIRMED BY PARLIAMENT

1. (U) SUMMARY: In a 51:37 public vote on 03 December, the National Assembly confirmed the proposed cabinet of PM Janez Jansa. MPs from Jansa's four-party coalition plus the two national minority representatives supported the slate of 15 candidates. END SUMMARY.

2. (U) Exactly two months after elections the Slovenian National Assembly confirmed the new GoS cabinet. With just one "up-or-down" vote for the entire package, the Parliament voted in Jansa's slate of 15 ministers-designate. All 49 members of the governing coalition parties (SDS, NSi, SLS, DeSUS) and the two MPs who represent the Hungarian and Italian national minorities voted for the cabinet. Thirty-seven opposition party MPs (from LDS, ZLSD, and SNS) voted against, with two abstentions.

3. (U) While Jansa's original proposal included 16 candidates, Minister-Designate without Portfolio for Local Self-Government and Regional Development Ms. Darinka Mravljak (SLS) resigned after difficulties in committee hearings. She explained she was withdrawing for "personal reasons." By law Jansa has three months to fill the slot; however, SLS has said it will propose a replacement for Mravljak by 13 December, with a vote expected to follow by the end of December.

4. (U) The new ministers and their main priorities, as presented during their parliamentary committee hearings, are as follows:

-- Dr. Andre Bajuk (NSi), Minister of Finance. His priorities are: registering state and municipal property and state obligations and claims; reforming the current state accounting system; analyzing effectiveness of state property management.

-- Dr. Dimitij Rupel (SDS), Minister of Foreign Affairs. His priorities are: Slovenia's 2005 Chairmanship-in-Office of the OSCE; Slovenia's 2008 presidency of the EU; enhancing relations with Croatia (including avoidance of future conflicts); strengthening relations with U.S.

-- Dr. Gregor Virant (not affiliated but close to Jansa's SDS party) Minister for Public Administration, a newly established ministry under Jansa's government. His main priorities are: breaking down administrative barriers for Slovenian citizens; combating the arrogance of public servants; transparency in public administration.

-- Mr. Dragutin Mate, Minister of Interior (no party affiliation, but close to Jansa since Slovenia became independent). His priorities are: improving prosecution of white-collar crimes; improving training opportunities for the police; improving internal relations at the ministry and relations between the police and local communities.

-- Mr. Karl Erjavec (DeSUS), Minister of Defense. His priorities are: ensuring top physical condition of soldiers; assuring enough financial resources for purchasing equipment and weapons between 2008-2012 through basic development funds; adoption of the status law on the military; selling disposable real estate worth SIT 6 billion (approx. USD 335,000); decreasing the number of administrative employees in the ministry.

-- Dr. Lovro Sturm (NSi), Minister of Justice. His priorities are: improving the operation of the judicial system to decrease court backlogs; adoption of the Law on Religious Freedom and Religious Communities.

-- Dr. Vasko Simoniti (SDS), the Minister of Culture. His main priorities are: increasing the share of state money for culture; protection of the Slovene language; increasing visibility of Slovenian culture abroad.

-- Mr. Andrej Vizjak (SDS), Minister of Economy. His main priorities are: assuring fair competition before selling state monopolies; greatly increasing budget share for tourism; privatizing Slovenian ironworks.

-- Mr. Andrej Brucan (SDS), Minister of Health. His priorities are: settling the 'agony' surrounding the purchase of radiation devices for Oncological Institute;

adoption of the Law on Equalization Schemes to prevent social inequities; larger involvement of private but monitored capital in health; and increasing taxes on alcohol and cigarettes.

-- Dr. Milan Zver (SDS), Minister of Education and Sport. His priorities are: increasing the percentage of children who attend kindergarten; more private kindergartens; improving personnel and infrastructure in schools; decreasing stress of pupils while maintaining high standards; improving the quality of knowledge; more autonomy for teachers; cheaper textbooks.

-- Ms. Marija Lukacic (not affiliated, but close to SDS), Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Food. Her priorities are: educating farmers; further developing a comprehensive land policy.

-- Mr. Janez Drobnic (NSi), Minister of Labor, Family and Social Affairs. His priorities are: adoption of the Law on Collective Bargaining; decreasing regional differences in unemployment; increasing employment levels, especially among disabled and older workers.

-- Dr. Jure Zupan (NSi), Minister of Higher Education, Science and Technology. His priorities are: rejuvenating and improving university personnel; settling the problems with continuing education; increasing resources for research.

-- Mr. Janez Podobnik (SLS), Minister of Environment and Spatial Planning. His priorities are: constructing one or two incinerators for waste; supporting 'green' energy; increasing availability of apartments for younger and married people.

-- Mr. Janez Bozic (SLS), Minister of Transport. His priorities are: using traffic policy to improve Slovenia's highway network; construction of a second railway track between Divaca and Koper.

15. (SBU) COMMENT: The vote on the cabinet went exactly as expected. What remains to be seen is how enduring the governing coalition will be, with SLS having a history of switching sides at opportune moments and with DeSUS party leader Anton Rous reportedly taking cues from former President Milan Kucan for the time being. Nonetheless, Jansa has managed perhaps the most efficient change of government after an election since Slovenia became independent. This purposeful efficiency was demonstrated by the immediate swearing in of Rupel, who assumed office right away in order to travel to the OSCE ministerial on 04 December in Sofia. The remaining cabinet members will assume office during the week of 06 December. END COMMENT.

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